

# **A GUIDE TO PART 2 OF THE CHILD POVERTY ACT 2010: DUTIES OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND OTHER BODIES IN ENGLAND**

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## **Section One: Making child poverty everybody's business**

### **Introduction**

1.1 Child poverty remains a persistent problem in many parts of the country. Child poverty – its causes and its consequences - corrodes life chances and is at the heart of social injustice and inequality. The Coalition Government has renewed the commitment to end child poverty by 2020, and the Child Poverty Act 2010, which received Royal Assent on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2010 (see: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/act26-03>) compels action to be taken by government at national and local levels.

Part 1 of the Child Poverty Act identifies four income-related targets that the Government must meet by 2020, and requires the Government to publish a new UK-wide Child Poverty Strategy by March 2011. This Strategy will set out the measures the Government proposes to take to ensure the targets are met and that children in the UK do not experience socio-economic disadvantage. Annual reports will monitor progress with the Strategy and identify action required to meet the vision. The Act requires the Strategy to be revised and refreshed every three years to 2020, to ensure that the most recent evidence and progress are taken into account.

Part 2 of the Child Poverty Act requires responsible local authorities and their partner authorities to cooperate to reduce, and mitigate the effects of, child poverty in their local areas. Further details of the duties are given in Sections Two and Three of this guide, but in summary responsible local authorities and their named partner authorities are required to:

- (a) *Cooperate:* The Act places a duty on responsible local authorities (those with top-tier functions) to put in place arrangements to work with partner authorities named in the Act to reduce, and mitigate the effects of, child poverty in their local area. The Act requires named partner authorities to cooperate with the local authority in these arrangements;
- (b) *Understand needs:* The Act places a duty on responsible local authorities to prepare and publish a local child poverty needs assessment. This will enable them to understand the characteristics of low income and disadvantaged families in their area, and the key drivers of poverty that must be addressed; and
- (c) *Develop and deliver a strategy:* The Act requires responsible local authorities and partner authorities to prepare a joint child poverty strategy for their local area, which should set out the contribution that each partner authority will make and should address the issues raised in the needs assessment.

Part 2 of the Act (Section 24) requires responsible local authorities to take their responsibilities to tackle child poverty into account when preparing or revising their Sustainable Community Strategies.

1.2 The Coalition Government is committed to decentralisation and localism, transferring power away from centrally-determined and driven targets and indicators towards locally-determined priorities and preferences for progress measurement. The Coalition Government has already taken a number of steps to deliver decentralisation through the way it works with local authorities, for example through abolishing the Comprehensive Area Assessment and committing further to reducing inspection burdens, seeking greater financial autonomy for local authorities and reshaping the state through place-based budgets.

### **Status and purpose of this guide**

1.3 The Government's response to formal consultation on draft statutory guidance covering Part 2 of the Child Poverty Act (see <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/strategy/parents/childpoverty/newsandviews/newsandviews/>) confirmed that, in line with its decentralisation and localism agenda, it would **not** provide statutory guidance to which local authorities and their partners must have regard in responding to the opportunities presented by Part 2 of the Child Poverty Act. This guide therefore does not constitute an authoritative interpretation of the law; that is a matter for the court.

1.4 The guide is designed instead to provide clear (non-statutory) background information and guidance to help local authorities, their named and un-named partners, and others locally with an interest in and influence over tackling child poverty to understand more about how they might respond to the Part 2 duties while allowing them the flexibility to act in a way that best suits local circumstances. The guide and associated materials will be updated as and when relevant changes come into effect.

### **Local partners' role**

1.5 Part 2 of the Child Poverty Act aims to build upon the important roles that local authorities, partners, politicians, policy makers, commissioners, front-line practitioners and voluntary and community sector organisations can all play in ending child poverty, as can representatives of communities themselves. These groups reinforce the links between strategy, policy and delivery.

1.6 Local public services are also large employers, and can affect families' incomes through ensuring their recruitment, retention, commissioning, human resource and pay policies support young people and parents to enter, stay and progress in work and escape poverty.

1.7 Many areas have already made significant progress in tackling child poverty, but child poverty still exists in every local area – whether it is concentrated in small pockets, or spread across a wider area – and therefore there is a case for partners in every area to take action.

1.8 The provisions in the Act provide a clear framework to ensure that local authorities and their named partners work together to understand fully what needs to be done to tackle child poverty and coordinate and improve their activities through coherent and comprehensive strategies. Importantly, local partners will have the flexibility to plan and deliver support services based on issues identified in the local child poverty needs assessments.

1.9 As noted above, it is clear that local authorities and their named partners are already engaged, to varying degrees, with the child poverty agenda. There is a range of existing structures, mechanisms and requirements of local authorities with which these child poverty responsibilities might fit.

### **Timetable**

1.10 Local authorities and their partners will wish to agree appropriate deadlines for publishing their first needs assessments, but will wish to ensure that the assessments and strategies can be developed in time to inform business and budget planning and preparation ahead of 2011-12, whilst allowing sufficient flexibility for responsible local authorities and partner authorities to align their activity on child poverty with other work. Local authorities and partners will also wish to agree when they think it suitable and appropriate to review and revise their assessments and strategies to ensure their continued relevance and links with broader local priorities.

1.11 As the Act links the child poverty duties to the preparation and revision of Sustainable Community Strategies (SCSs), responsible authorities will wish to ensure that their response to the child poverty duties fits with their plans and timetables for revising their SCSs.

### **Funding**

1.12 The Government is providing funding in this implementation year (2010-11) to support local authorities in England who are leading cooperation around the duties. This funding will be distributed to all 'top-tier' local authorities via the Area Based Grant and grant payments are likely to commence in mid-October 2010. The purpose of the funding is to reflect the new burden on local authorities from leading the cooperation arrangements on child poverty and preparing the needs assessments and strategies. The payment per local authority will be weighted, in part, relative to the numbers of children in poverty in the area, reflecting the scale of the overall challenge. Decisions on the availability of funding beyond 2010-11 will be made as part of the Spending Review 2010.

End of Section One

## **Section Two: The duty to cooperate**

### **Introduction**

2.1. Tackling child poverty involves action across a range of policy and service delivery areas: helping remove the barriers that might be preventing parents from entering and sustaining work; working with families to maximise their income and ensure they live in safe environments in which they can thrive; and ensuring that all children have the best start in life.

2.2 No individual agency or service provider can do this alone: it requires the integration of services driven by close partnership working. Integrating services is best done at a local level, allowing local areas to determine the right mix of services and how best to join up these services to meet the needs of families.

### **Partners under duty to cooperate**

2.3 Local authorities are the strategic leaders for their areas, responsible for working with and coordinating partners' involvement in developing solutions for a range of issues. They are well placed to lead coordinated and cross-cutting action to address child poverty which is why the Child Poverty Act requires responsible local authorities to lead partnership working in their area.

2.4 The top-tier local authority<sup>1</sup> is the responsible local authority for the new duties and is required to establish and maintain the cooperation arrangements.

Part 2 of the Act names each of the following partners as a statutory partner authority in relation to the responsible local authority:

- (a) The district authorities (other than the responsible local authority) who deliver key services including housing benefits and securing local facilities for families;
- (b) Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities;
- (c) Jobcentre Plus;
- (d) The Police, Youth Offending Teams, and Probation Trusts; and
- (e) Transport Authorities.

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<sup>1</sup> The Child Poverty Act states that for the purposes of Part 2 of the Act "each of the following is a responsible local authority –

- (a) a county council in England;
- (b) a district council in England, other than a council for a district in a county for which there is a county council;
- (c) a London borough council;
- (d) the Council of the Isles of Scilly; and
- (e) the Common Council of the City of London in its capacity as a local authority.

### **The top-tier local authority**

2.5 Top-tier authorities include upper-tier authorities in two-tier areas and unitary authorities. They have a lead role in setting up and maintaining the co-operation and partnership arrangements to tackle child poverty and in preparing and publishing the local needs assessments and preparing joint child poverty strategies for local areas. The aim, however, is to promote co-operation, so their leadership role can be exercised in a facilitative and consultative way which will enable partners to participate and contribute fully and develop a sense of ownership and commitment to the broad aim of tackling child poverty in the area.

2.6 In addition to education and children's services, local authority services such as adult social care, regeneration, housing, transport, and leisure all have influence over the potential drivers, and consequences, of child poverty, so should be engaged.

2.7 In unitary authorities, all of these services co-exist within the same organisation, so the Chief Executive can play an important role in making the connections across the senior management team. The situation in two-tier areas is different because district councils, which have responsibility for a number of these important functions, are statutory partner authorities. Here the top-tier authority will want to engage with the districts through the child poverty cooperation arrangements as it does with its other partner authorities.

### **The statutory partner authorities**

2.8 The organisations detailed in this section are specifically listed as statutory partners in Part 2, Section 20 of the Child Poverty Act and are therefore placed under a duty to cooperate with the responsible local authority in making arrangements 'with a view to reducing, and mitigating the effects of, child poverty in the responsible local authority's area' (Child Poverty Act Part 2, Section 21).

2.9 Part 2 of the Act also encourages partner authorities to pool funds or share other resources with the responsible local authority or with one another as part of the cooperation arrangements. This will help ensure child poverty is tackled in the most resourceful way. Guidance and good practice on pooling and aligning budgets can be found at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/poolingaligningbudgets>.

### **District Councils**

2.10 In two-tier areas, district councils are partner authorities and have

responsibility for a range of services which can impact significantly on reducing child poverty and the wellbeing of children in the local area.

2.11 In some large two-tier areas, it may be sensible for child poverty cooperation to be organised at a district level and then coordinated at a county level. This helps ensure that local differences are picked up and fed into the needs assessment and strategy development, and helps secure engagement of the district councils, including elected members, in the child poverty agenda.

### **Primary Care Trusts (PCTS) and Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs)**

2.12 Good physical and mental health is essential to securing improved outcomes for children and young people, and to improving employment outcomes for parents.

2.13 PCTs, the local NHS organisations, have responsibility for improving health, reducing health inequalities, assessing the health needs of the local population and commissioning healthcare services from a range of providers to meet these needs through every stage of life. Neither a PCT nor a local authority can deliver its priorities without the active co-operation of the other.

2.14 It is important that the SHA is a partner authority for the child poverty cooperation arrangements because it provides strategic leadership to local health systems. It develops NHS organisations, is responsible for workforce development (including education, training and workforce planning) and ensures that local health systems operate effectively and deliver improved performance. SHAs operate at a regional level and hold all local NHS organisations (with the exception of Foundation Trusts) to account for performance.

2.15 Plans are currently being considered to change the way health services are determined and commissioned, which may result in changes to the roles of PCTs and SHAs. But for the time being they remain named partners in Part 2 of the Act so their participation in child poverty cooperation remains necessary and worthwhile and their active engagement in child poverty partnership working should continue until any future structural developments come into effect.

### **Jobcentre Plus**

2.16 Jobcentre Plus works to reduce the number of children living in poverty by supporting parents into employment and training. Jobcentre Plus also advises on benefits and other financial support, job vacancies, skills and volunteering opportunities and contributes to the aim to reduce the number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET). They also gather information from customers on barriers to childcare and inform the availability and accessibility of affordable and suitable formal childcare.

2.17 Supporting parents to move into work is a key driver to raising family incomes and lifting children out of poverty, and in raising the aspiration of children living in those families. Jobcentre Plus can work with local partners to deliver a coherent package of support for young people and parents through improved joint planning and delivery of local employment services. Jobcentre Plus already has many effective working relationships with local authorities and other partners, for example, providing work-focussed and other services as part of the core offer of early years support to families in Sure Start Children's Centres.

## **Police**

2.18 Crime can blight the lives of many families living in the most deprived areas of the country. For example in 2009/2010 the households in the most deprived areas of the country were more than twice as likely to have been burgled as those in the least deprived areas. Therefore crime must be tackled if we are to improve children's life chances. And whilst the vast majority of lower income families are hard working and law abiding there is associative evidence to suggest that there are links between parents who engage in crime and poorer poverty and deprivation outcomes in their children.

2.19 Local partners will want therefore to work closely with the police to help reduce crime, and ensure that families exposed to crime receive the support they need. Providing safe communities for children and families to live in is an important part of the development of effective joint child poverty strategies for local areas and is central to the core purpose of our police forces.

## **Probation and Youth Offending Teams (YOT)**

2.20 Children under YOT supervision are some of the most vulnerable young people in our society and many will have come from disadvantaged backgrounds. In this context, the YOT can help to identify and begin to address child poverty both in terms of breaking the cycle of offending behaviour and referring the young person to wider mainstream and specialist children's services.

2.21 For children in conflict with the law themselves the YOT have a statutory responsibility to provide youth justice services which will typically include the supervision of a court order. However, the YOT must work in partnership with wider mainstream and specialist services to ensure that young people who have offended or who are at risk of offending receive the full range of support services they need. This is even more critical where assessments have highlighted child poverty as a driver of offending behaviour. The YOT must therefore be in a position to refer young people onto other services as appropriate.

2.22 Probation's work to rehabilitate offenders in order to prevent re-offending involves equipping ex-offenders and those serving sentences in the community with the skills they need to move into employment. They therefore have an important role to play in tackling child poverty: ensuring offenders do not repeat the cycle of re-offending that prevents their access to employment

and in turn their ability to provide for their families.

## **Transport**

2.23 Transport infrastructure, and accessibility to local services for children and parents, and employment opportunities for parents, are important in all local areas and are likely to be particularly so for those living in more remote or rural areas where the effects of growing up in poverty may be compounded by poorer access to services. Transport authorities should work with partner authorities to make sure that as well as making transport services safe, affordable and effective, all children and families - including the most disadvantaged - have the confidence to use local transport and can take full advantage of learning, leisure and employment opportunities in their local area.

## **Other partners and how they can engage**

2.24 Some organisations not listed in Part 2 of the Child Poverty Act as statutory partners can also add significant value to local child poverty cooperation arrangements and are already actively engaged in many areas.

2.25 These partners can be brought into the local cooperation arrangements at the discretion of the responsible local authority, after consulting with its partner authorities. Alternatively, they may be consulted on the development of the local needs assessment, and the joint child poverty strategy for the local area, as the responsible local authority thinks fit.

2.26 The partners listed below are not intended to be an exhaustive list but are those with which local authorities and named partners are most likely to collaborate more frequently in relation to child poverty.

## **Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)**

2.27 The VCS has both a strategic and service delivery role in tackling child poverty. VCS organisations often work with marginalised and vulnerable groups who do not engage positively with statutory organisations. This means these organisations can be acutely aware of the needs and challenges of certain groups of children and their parents and can provide an alternative route for the more marginalised to be heard, by campaigning on their behalf, and by delivering services through more trusted or flexible routes.

2.28 In many local areas the VCS will be diverse, ranging from large delivery and lobbying organisations, to small locally based groups. The services they provide range from services targeted directly at children to those reaching out to vulnerable parents. Where smaller VCS organisations do not have the capacity to engage directly the local authority should take steps to work with them through local infrastructure organisations, for example voluntary sector forums. All engagement work with VCS organisations should follow the Compact principles which provide a framework for good partnership working for mutual benefit (see <http://www.thecompact.org.uk/> for more information).

2.29 VCS organisations have significant expertise they can offer, not least in the delivery of unique and specialist services and in helping to engage and consult with children and parents on the development of local child poverty needs assessments and/or strategies.

2.30 Local advice agencies play a strong and important role in tackling child poverty. For example:

- (a) cooperation between Jobcentre Plus and local advice agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau can help generate valuable customer feedback, stimulate more effective access to Jobcentre Plus services and broker the right support for families according to their circumstances;
- (b) partnership working between health services and advice agencies can improve access to advice that improves health and reduces demand on health services; and
- (c) early engagement with advice services helps prevent families at risk of poverty and debt from falling into financial difficulties, through helping to improve financial capability, improving families' abilities to manage on low incomes and to meet their responsibilities, such as reporting changes of circumstances therefore avoiding over or underpayments of benefits and tax credits.

### **HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC)**

2.31 As administrators of child benefit, the current child trust fund, and tax credits (Working Tax Credits including extra help for people with disabilities and help with childcare costs, Child Tax Credits including support for children) HMRC have an important role to play by ensuring vulnerable families access the financial support they need to boost their household income. Local partners may wish to establish and/or strengthen links with HMRC to ensure local families in poverty are fully aware of the forms of financial support available to them, and how to access it.

### **The housing sector**

2.32 Access to decent housing can be a major factor in helping to improve health and safety and other outcomes for children, young people, and parents, and helping families prosper. This is a local authority function, so the appropriate strategic bodies (the responsible local authorities) are among the statutory members. Within the local authority, the Chief Executive has an important role in ensuring that the housing functions are exercised in a manner consistent with developing a child poverty strategy.

2.33 Housing issues can help break the causes and consequences of poverty by, for example:

- (a) ensuring there are effective working arrangements (with children's services for example) for promoting and planning homelessness

prevention and supported accommodation for teenage parents, for young people leaving care or custody, for homeless 16 and 17 year olds, and addressing the housing needs of children and young people who have complex health conditions or disabilities; and

- (b) addressing how housing might contribute to poorer health outcomes for children or parents, thereby affecting educational potential or employability.

2.34 Registered Social Landlords and Arms Length Management Organisations are one of the main delivery agents of social housing and, as such, will also have a role to play in ensuring access to and maintenance of decent housing.

### **Schools and colleges**

2.35 Schools, Further Education (FE) Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges play an important role in enabling children and young people to gain the skills they need to secure employment and a decent income. Local areas are best placed to decide how best schools and colleges can engage with the partnership.

2.36 The FE sector also delivers training and development opportunities for parents - a key contribution to enabling many families to escape poverty. The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 introduced a statutory duty on FE Colleges to promote the economic and social well-being of the localities in which they are based. Local partnerships may want to consider whether to invite colleges or other training organisations to sit on relevant boards, encouraging the key colleges and other providers in the area to agree how this might best be achieved. This will facilitate a dialogue around how to ensure more people benefit from the courses available, while looking at how to adjust provision to best reflect the needs.

2.37 The focus of FE Colleges extends beyond the purely vocational and includes the ability to engage with social challenges. FE Colleges offer unique opportunities for engagement with large numbers of adults and young people from more disadvantaged communities. Colleges' detailed knowledge of local labour market and economic conditions can enable them to offer effective and relevant advice on economic regeneration. In addition, their pastoral role encourages students to make better decisions about their own future well-being in general as well as in relation to education and training.

### **Employers and business organisations**

2.38 Local employers or consortiums of employers may have a role to play in supporting the employment of low-income parents in partnership work with Jobcentre Plus, the availability of part-time, family friendly and flexible work patterns, training and progression opportunities, and through tackling barriers to employment through access to, and affordability of, childcare. They may also play a role in raising family incomes through raising awareness of tax credits and other in-work benefits.

2.39 The Coalition Government's commitment to the Big Society signals a movement away from over-reliance on state-provided services. This should lead to a raised profile for employers and business organisations, opening up public services to new providers like charities, social enterprises and private companies, to enhance innovation, diversity and responsiveness to public need.

### **Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission**

2.40 Family breakdown is a time when both parents and children can be particularly vulnerable to a fall in their income and wellbeing. Child Maintenance may be one of several factors which can help children in separated families who may be at risk of living in poverty. It can provide parents with caring responsibilities with regular income which could be of significant value to low-income families and improve the lives of children in or near poverty. The Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission, through its information and support service, Child Maintenance (CM) Options, can make an important contribution to supporting families. For local authorities with high incidence of separated families, or teenage pregnancy, the Local Strategic Partnership should engage directly with the Commission to raise awareness amongst parents of the need to take financial responsibility for their children.

### **The new duties and the Local Strategic Partnership**

2.41 The specific governance and management structures that enable child poverty cooperation to work effectively will vary across local areas. However as the authorities and partners identified in the Act will already be members of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), this body and its related sub-groups provide an appropriate vehicle for implementing the local duties and ensuring that strategic cooperation results in action on the ground through local service provision.

2.42 Arrangements for enabling cooperation amongst responsible local authorities and partner authorities, sitting within existing structures, should turn a shared child poverty strategic vision into the development of integrated working; joint commissioning; integrated processes; and integrated front-line delivery across all relevant partners.

2.43 The intention of the new child poverty duties is not to create more partnerships and processes. There is flexibility as to which group or forum takes responsibility for leading action on child poverty. The key features are that they come together to focus on child poverty, that they represent the range of partner authorities named in the Child Poverty Act and that sufficient time, resource and commitment is available to fulfil their duties in the Act and make a real difference to outcomes.

### **End of Section Two**

## **Section Three: The duty to prepare and publish local child poverty needs assessments and the duty to prepare joint child poverty strategies for local areas**

### **Introduction**

3.1 The Child Poverty Act (Part 2, Section 22) requires a local authority to prepare and publish an assessment of the needs of children living in poverty in its area. Research with local authorities has shown that a needs assessment is a key driver to addressing child poverty within a local area as it builds a shared understanding of the issues and demonstrates the extent and nature of the local challenge. This is crucial to focusing attention and mobilising action on child poverty within the local authority, the Local Strategic Partnership, and across wider partners.

3.2 Part 2 of the Child Poverty Act (Section 23) also states that the arrangements responsible local authorities make to cooperate with partners should include preparing a joint child poverty strategy for the local area.

### **Local child poverty needs assessments**

3.3 Extensive consultation with those affected by Part 2 of the Child Poverty Act showed there is strong demand for help and support to enable the preparation and publication of local child poverty needs assessments. The Child Poverty Unit has therefore commissioned the production of a Child Poverty Needs Assessment Toolkit (see <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=22025996>) which:

- (a) provides an example framework for an assessment to inform thinking at local level;
- (b) provides a core child poverty fact sheet, offering headline facts and figures;
- (c) describes methods for engaging with children, young people and parents;
- (d) identifies data sources to inform assessments;
- (e) suggests how assessments might usefully link with child poverty building blocks covering Financial Support, Parental Employment and Skills, Life Chances and Place; and
- (f) suggests how child poverty needs assessments might best be aligned with other public sector strategies and needs assessments.

3.4 The needs assessment provides the evidence and context for developing the responsible local authority's strategic approach to tackling

child poverty. It gives a greater understanding of the distribution and drivers of child poverty in the local area, and where possible, how it varies across local areas. It can build on existing understanding of local levels and concentrations of deprivation and the links between child poverty and other local priorities.

3.5 In addition to the data currently collected centrally, responsible local authorities and partner authorities will also have access to a wide range of information – from statistical data to local knowledge – to inform the needs assessment. The range and nature of data included can best be locally framed, and hard statistical data can be blended with, and set within the context of, other sources of evidence. In particular, qualitative sources of information can help to place quantitative data in context.

3.6 The Child Poverty Unit (CPU) website provides access to a range of data sources that can help local partners develop their needs assessments. This includes detailed data sheets that provide performance data on child poverty-related national indicators for every local authority: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/strategy/parents/childpoverty/data/data/>

3.7 Local partners may also benefit from sharing the data they hold in order to target services at those in most need, and use their resources most efficiently. A dedicated webpage providing access to guidance on how to share data both legally and effectively is also now available from the CPU's website, see: [http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/strategy/parents/childpoverty/data/sharing\\_child\\_poverty\\_data/sharing\\_child\\_poverty\\_data\\_effectively/](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/strategy/parents/childpoverty/data/sharing_child_poverty_data/sharing_child_poverty_data_effectively/)

3.8 The data and evidence presented in the needs assessment will enable exploration and analysis of the needs of children living in poverty in the local area with the specific purpose of identifying key priorities and actions for the local strategy to have the greatest impact. To this end, as well as presenting the latest available information, the analysis could usefully show trends over time, make comparisons between areas within the authority, between children/households with different characteristics; and with similar authorities.

3.9 A good needs assessment can help to provide:

- (a) a deeper understanding of the characteristics of families with children living in poverty in the area and where they are situated in their local area, demonstrating a clear understanding of what child poverty looks like locally;
- (b) an understanding of the key drivers of child poverty in the area and the links with local service provision;
- (c) an understanding of relevant local service provision across the authority and its partners, their suitability, culture and available resources including the extent to which the workforce across all partner bodies is able to understand and address child poverty;

- (d) links to other assessments and strategic plans and an indication of when best the child poverty assessment should be reviewed and revised;
- (e) a better understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to tackling child poverty in the area; and
- (f) a solid foundation for the development of the local child poverty strategy.

### **Publishing an assessment**

3.10 The Government will not be laying regulations specifying when and how local child poverty needs assessments must be published, reviewed, revised or consulted upon. But the responsible local authority will want to agree with partners how and when to publish, review and revise the assessments in line with their local needs, so that these can usefully inform the timely preparation, review and revision of local child poverty strategies.

3.11 Local authorities and their partners will wish to consider how best to align the development of their local child poverty needs assessments with other activity, including links with other assessments and their wider business planning and budget-setting processes.

### **Joint child poverty strategies for local areas**

3.12 The Act states that the joint child poverty strategy for the local area should include measures relating to an area's needs assessment, ensuring a clear link between the needs of residents and the planned actions to address those needs. The Act also encourages those strategies to include specific measures relating to other matters identified by responsible local authorities or their partner authorities as pertinent to child poverty in the local area.

3.13 The scope and purpose of joint child poverty strategies for local areas depends very much on what it is that those cooperating locally are setting out to achieve, especially, as noted above, what it is that their local child poverty needs assessments indicate needs to be done. Joint child poverty strategies for local areas should:

- (a) *be based on analysis*: the local child poverty needs assessments should provide the core base of evidence for the strategies, identifying the distribution of child poverty across the local area, indicating the relationship between child poverty and local services, and providing qualitative insights from children, young people and families;
- (b) *identify strategic choices*: there may be several courses of action proposed which could usefully be identified and their intended impact assessed against the findings of the local child poverty needs assessments. But the strategies will set out the overall approach for

tackling child poverty and the priority issues to be addressed; and

- (c) *identify how the strategies will be implemented*: what resources, structures and mechanisms will need to be in place to ensure effective implementation, what resources will be allocated and what information systems will be used to measure and/or indicate progress.

### **Ensuring comprehensive strategies**

3.14 Joint child poverty strategies for local areas will need to inform and be informed by other strategic and planning material, and there may be initial gaps in strategies which will need filling in due course. Although there is no requirement or prescription for local strategies necessarily to be stand-alone documents in their own right, they should be visible, transparent and accountable in order to comply with Section 23 of the Act.

3.15 In general, joint child poverty strategies for local areas should set out the shared vision, based on a clear rationale and strong evidence, for tackling child poverty in their local area. It should be clear at a strategic level how positive outcomes will be achieved; and the strategy should identify the partner authorities responsible for taking action, say how progress will be measured and monitored and identify the resources available to implement the strategies.

3.16 In addition, child poverty strategies produced by local authorities should show:

- (a) determined commitment to ensure services work in joined-up ways;
- (b) overt links to existing and related strategies, such as Regeneration Strategies and Sustainable Community Strategies;
- (c) senior management and elected member support for and commitment to the strategy and associated action plans;
- (d) how they are informed by and seek to address issues raised by children, young people, parents and carers; and
- (e) mechanisms and arrangements for the provision of resources and budgets.

3.17 Local authorities and their partners will also want to consider and address the implications of their needs assessments and strategies for the development of their workforces, and ensure that their strategies include the necessary actions to develop shared understandings of the causes and consequences of child poverty across the workforce and the knowledge and skills to play their part in tackling it.

### **Implementing the strategy**

3.18 The strategy will need to incorporate plans which should detail the action to be taken to support the strategy's aim and objectives, who will be responsible for taking action, and when. The plan could also:

- (a) identify governance arrangements and progress monitoring mechanisms;
- (b) show clear lines of decision-making and coordination across existing structures; and
- (c) establish how action shown in the plan fits with related business and commissioning plans.

End of Section Three

## **Section Four: Community engagement and consultation**

4.1 The Coalition Government's decentralisation and localism agenda, alongside its support for the principles and practices of the Big Society, can enable communities to tackle barriers such as deprivation and disadvantage. Every community is different, with different needs and different priorities. In exercising their power, local authorities will want to listen to their communities, which means consulting them properly, giving them more choice over the services they get and ensuring that there is transparency about how public money is being spent.

The Child Poverty Act requires responsible local authorities, in preparing or modifying their joint child poverty strategies, to consult such children, and organisations working with or representing children, as the authority thinks fit and such parents, and organisations working with or representing parents, also as the authority thinks fit. The Act also states that responsible local authorities may consult such other persons or bodies as the authority thinks fit.

4.2 Local child poverty needs assessments and strategies will be better informed by the views of those affected by child poverty, so responsible local authorities will wish to consider how best to arrange for consultation amongst those affected. This will include young people and their families and those who represent them. However schools, colleges, VCS organisations and community groups can also make an important contribution.

4.3 Such consultation will enable responsible local authorities and their partner authorities to assure the quality of their proposed strategies, in so far as they are relevant and responsive to the needs of children and parents in their local area. It is for responsible local authorities and their partners to decide how best to undertake and present the findings of these consultations.

4.4 The VCS can play a key role in supporting local authorities in their duty to consult children and parents in the development of their strategies: the Act requires local authorities to consult children and parents AND organisations which represent them. The VCS can support local authorities in their duty to consult by:

- (a) supporting them in effective consultation and participation (see, for example, Save the Children's guidance: [http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54\\_12369.htm](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54_12369.htm));
- (b) putting local authorities in touch with the range of children and parents with whom they might meaningfully consult (e.g. community organisations supporting asylum seekers or families living with

disability, and helping local authorities to set up consultations and participation events with their clients/stakeholders); and

- (c) helping to ensure a range of VCS bodies themselves contribute to needs assessments and strategies. They will have a wealth of experience through their work with a range of marginalised people who may not access mainstream services.

End of Section Four

## **Section Five: Support available**

5.1 The Government's intention is for accountability for local service improvement to shift increasingly away from central Government to a system of self-driven improvement and challenge by local authorities themselves with sector-led improvement support where external support is needed. This includes the delivery of services aimed at tackling child poverty. In line with its decentralisation and localism agenda, the Core Offer of Support (see 5.3 below) is being re-focussed to meet priorities identified through informal and formal consultation, to enable knowledge, expertise and practical support and advice to be available. This support will help areas identify and address locally how best to reduce and mitigate the corrosive effects of child poverty.

5.2 Local Government has already taken leadership around this agenda, as evidenced by the three child poverty Beacon Councils (Tower Hamlets, Cornwall and Newcastle) and the range of child poverty pilots developing and sharing expertise and learning from each other. In addition, many local areas are already learning from each other through the development of child poverty networks and through their early work on needs assessments and strategies. Local areas may wish to consider the future role of such peer networks particularly in terms of sharing expertise and working together as they implement the new duties.

5.3 The Child Poverty Unit (CPU) has worked with various organisations to develop a 'Core Offer' of sector-led support for local areas to help them address child poverty. The purpose of the Offer is to enable local authorities and other partners to serve local residents more effectively in a number of ways:

- Ensuring policy, planning, tools and delivery are fully focussed on delivering frontline services
- Working to achieve best value for citizens and government.

5.4 The Core Offer of support includes:

(a) **Local Government Improvement and Development (LGID formerly the IDeA):** LGID works with local authorities in developing good practice and supporting partnerships. LGID has developed a Child Poverty Needs Assessment toolkit which can be accessed at <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=22025996> and LGID intends to deliver workshops to support the development of local needs assessments later in 2010. LGID can also deliver support to elected members/senior officials, specialist sector led support to individual local areas as requested and support in maintaining existing child poverty networks where local areas require. For further information see [www.idea.gov.uk](http://www.idea.gov.uk);

(b) **Child Poverty Community of Practice (CoP) for public service:** is an online community platform supporting collaborative networks for those involved in tackling child poverty from across the public service including those who are working for their communities on a voluntary basis. The CoP is

available and active, with further development underway to expand the information, guidance on policy and best practice, features, case studies and links to more online resources such as the Child Poverty Needs Assessment toolkit. You can join the CoP at: <http://www.communities.idea.gov.uk/comm/landing-home.do?id=1362979>;

(c) **Centre for Excellence and Outcomes (C4EO):** the C4EO provides three key areas of support focussing on sharing knowledge, individually tailored support and access to data and evidence. For more details see [www.c4eo.org.uk](http://www.c4eo.org.uk);

(d) **Child Poverty Unit (CPU):** the CPU brings together the Department for Education, HM Treasury and Department for Work and Pensions to develop and take forward work to ensure the Government's aim to eradicate child poverty is met. This includes the child poverty pilots, research including evidence of what works and case studies as well as supporting the delivery of initiatives to tackle child poverty at a local level and ensure this informs national policy. For more details see [www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/childpoverty](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/childpoverty);

(e) **Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC):** CWDC will provide opportunities for the children and young people's workforce to access information on current resources and training materials that can support a reduction in the effects of poverty and disadvantage and improve life chances. CWDC will identify and develop further training materials to priority groups of the workforce and will work to ensure support for tackling child poverty are taken into account and embedded across all aspects of CWDC's work. For further information: [www.sharestreet.cwdcouncil.org.uk](http://www.sharestreet.cwdcouncil.org.uk) or [www.cwdcouncil.org](http://www.cwdcouncil.org);

(f) **The National College** Lead on leadership development for schools and academies, children centre's and director's of children's services offering leadership programmes, research and networking through membership in all regions in England. <http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk>;

(g) **Save the Children (StC):** Local authorities can commission StC to provide support to meet the duty to consult children, young people and families including carrying out direct consultation and training staff in consultation and participation in poverty issues. As noted in Section Four, StC has produced a guide to the Act and some information about how to ensure effective participation in work on child poverty (see [http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54\\_12369.htm](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54_12369.htm)). For more details see the Child Poverty Community of Practice at <http://www.communities.idea.gov.uk/comm/landing-home.do?id=1362979>; and

(h) **Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships (RIEPs):** RIEPs work collaboratively with local authorities and other partners to encourage improvement and transformation and collaboration between partners. Each RIEP has identified priorities in conjunction with localities, and a number are

undertaking specific projects to tackle child poverty. Local authorities may wish to raise requests for support in relation to tackling child poverty. For more details see: <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=8595264>

<b>Support</b>	<b>LGID</b>	<b>CoP</b>	<b>C4EO</b>	<b>CPU</b>	<b>CWDC</b>	<b>StC</b>	<b>RIEPs</b>	<b>NCL</b>
Peer review	✓				✓			
Needs Assessment	✓		✓		✓		✓	
Leadership	✓		✓				✓	✓
Networking	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Sector led tailored support inc devt. of CP strategies	✓		✓				✓	
Workforce development			✓		✓		✓	
Effective Practice	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Knowledge (national policy updates, research, etc.)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Data	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Consultation			✓			✓		
Self assessment	✓		✓					

## **Future arrangements**

5.5 In taking forward this work it is hoped that the Core Offer of Support together with network and peer support arrangements that local authorities and their partners may already have in place, will facilitate improvement and innovation in tackling child poverty. Take-up and effectiveness of the Core Offer will be monitored by the Core Offer partners through feedback from local and national partnerships as well as any unmet demand. It will therefore be important for local areas to flag any concerns about the content, scope and capacity of the Core Offer and its delivery partners to ensure that it is meeting the needs of Local Government and partners in the most effective way.

End of Section Five